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Robert Donley, Executive Director

January 7, 2014

Mr. Michael E. Marshall  
Secretary of the Senate  
Second Floor, State Capitol  
Des Moines, IA 50319

Ms. Carmine Boal  
Chief Clerk of the House  
Second Floor, State Capitol  
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Mr. Marshall and Ms. Boal:

In accordance with SF 470, the annual report for the statewide research and development entity at the University of Northern Iowa is hereby submitted to the General Assembly. As you will note, the report provides the background, model, approach, and structure for the Iowa Research and Development Center for Educational Transformation at the University of Northern Iowa. The University is committed to leading statewide efforts that will optimize resources, capitalize on existing research, leverage research funding, and build capacity for a community of scholars.

The initial concept or model for conducting educational research and development in Iowa relied on a PK-12 site, which was called the Statewide Research and Development School. However, after extensive review and discussion, it became obvious that this model of conducting research and development at one location did not optimize the breadth and complexity of educational resources throughout Iowa. Being constrained to one site would limit UNI's capabilities to embrace and collaborate with educational entities across Iowa and conduct research in those PK-12 schools best suited for the required research.

The new model to conduct research and development throughout PK-12 schools in Iowa will be implemented by UNI's Center for Educational Transformation. The Center provides the infrastructure to conduct research throughout Iowa and to disseminate research findings on a statewide and national basis. This new approach reflects best practices at other teacher training institutions in the country and provides a more distributive research model that is inclusive of all Iowa school districts.

The Center for Educational Transformation will be led by the Center's Advisory Council which will report directly to the Executive Vice President and Provost at UNI. The Council includes representatives from the public universities, private universities, area education agencies, and PK-12 school districts.

Please let me know if there are any questions concerning this report.

Sincerely,

Robert Donley

Enclosure

cc: Legislative Log  
Legislative Liaisons  
dg/h/aa/R&D/legislog/jan14report.doc

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**REPORT ON THE IOWA RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL  
TRANSFORMATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**  
**JANUARY 2014**

**Executive Summary:** This report provides the background, model, approach, and structure for the Iowa Research and Development Center for Educational Transformation at the University of Northern Iowa. The university is committed to leading statewide efforts that will optimize resources, capitalize on existing research, leverage research funding, and build capacity for a community of scholars.

**Background:**

The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) is the leader in PK-12 education in Iowa. This historic priority was established as one of the six goals in the University Strategic Plan (Goal 3: Lead the State and Nation in PK-12 Education). UNI's preeminence in PK-12 education is evidenced by faculty commitment to teaching, research and community engagement. The university's fundraising efforts resulted in two of the largest gifts ever to UNI. Businessman Richard O. Jacobson donated \$11 million to create a literacy center in the College of Education and his most recent gift, the largest gift ever to UNI, \$15 million, will be used for endowed professorships, scholarships, faculty research, and an annual education summit.

The 2009 legislation creating the research and development structure at UNI was Senate File 470. The goals outlined in Senate File 470 for the research and development initiative include the following:

- To raise and sustain the level of all Pre-K-12 students' educational attainment and personal development through innovative and promising teaching practice.
- To enhance the preparation and professional competence of educators in this state through collaborative inquiry and exchange of professional knowledge in teaching and learning.
- To focus on research that transforms teaching practice to meet the changing needs of the state's educational system.

In April, UNI received a \$2 million grant from the Roy J. Carver Trust to establish the Center for Educational Transformation (CET). On October 24, 2013, the Board of Regents, State of Iowa, approved the Center for Educational Transformation (Agenda Item ESAC 3). The Center will fulfill the mission of the previously discussed Iowa Research and Development Center for Education Innovation at the University of Northern Iowa. This report provides an update on activities since the last report was submitted.

## CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

The center will offer a new, original model in which the state can both address its research and development needs, and engage in projects of national significance. Through field-based and action-oriented research, innovative educational practices and effective policy analysis, UNI will leverage its strengths to dramatically impact PK-12 student learning and teacher effectiveness across the state and to inform the national education landscape.

### VISION, MISSION AND GOALS

In January 2013, UNI convened a group of 23 stakeholders representing higher education, PK-12 education, government and the private sector to participate in a planning retreat focused on the proposed Center. Building on the internal planning activities already underway, the focus of this retreat was to bring together a variety of educational “voices” from across campus and the state to formalize the vision, mission and goals of the proposed Center. The group also began exploring potential research questions that would be addressed through the Center’s activities. The success of this retreat exceeded expectations and provided UNI leadership not only with a solid framework for the Center’s strategic plan, but also an engaged group of individuals willing to serve the Center in an advisory capacity. As a result of the retreat activities, a shared vision and mission for the Center for Educational Transformation emerged.

#### Vision

The Center for Educational Transformation will redefine the face of educational research in Iowa and beyond. Founded upon the values of partnership and innovation, the Center will respond to and be inclusive of all education stakeholders. This intrinsic connectivity will allow the Center to become embedded in the Iowa educational landscape where partners not only “reach in” to access the Center’s expertise, but the Center “reaches out” to promote best practices from research results and to connect partners with one another. This model will enable national research transformations to be situated in a local context. This is a Center that is transformational. The transformation will be evidenced through the Center’s commitment to learners, educators, and systems.

#### Mission

To achieve this vision and fulfill the state mandate for educational research and development, the Center’s mission is:

- *To transform education in Iowa and the nation through collaborative research, innovation, practice, and policy advocacy.*

#### Goals

The Center for Educational Transformation will balance both stability and fluidity; stability as the hub for Iowa’s educational research and fluidity as research initiatives are tailored to schools’ needs. Overarching goals for the Center revolve around four key areas: Research, Practice, Policy, and Innovation. These goals connect directly with the State of Iowa’s legislative intent for educational research and development. Research activities will be a blend of both long-term solutions and opportunities to quickly address an issue and disseminate best practices across the state.

**GOAL #1 – Research**

- Conduct research aimed at transforming our current teaching, learning and educational systems.

**GOAL #2 – Practice**

- Distill, disseminate and encourage best practices in curriculum, instruction and assessment.

**GOAL #3 – Policy**

- Leverage partnerships across the state to inform decision-makers and drive policy grounded in research results.

**GOAL #4 – Innovation**

- Produce innovations to transform our teaching, learning and educational systems.

**STAFF**

The Center Director will be a tenured faculty member who will report directly to the Executive Vice President and Provost and will be an ex-officio member of the UNI Teacher Education Executive Committee. The search began earlier this fall, and finalists will come to campus in late November/early December.

The director will develop relationships within the university (teacher preparation programs) and with external stakeholders (e.g., school district personnel, state leaders, Iowa Department of Education staff) to ensure the university carries out the Center's mission. In addition, the director will determine the Center's overall organizational structure and will have managerial responsibilities. Most important, s/he will provide leadership and supervision of research fellows, graduate students, and project faculty. In addition, the Director will:

- Create an operating plan and develop strategic objectives that support UNI priorities;
- Secure grants and implement projects related to teacher preparation and PK-12 education;
- Measure and disseminate the impact and outcomes of the Center's research and development;
- Leverage partnerships across the state to inform decision-makers and drive policy grounded in research results; produce innovations to transform teaching, learning and education systems; and
- Recruit, hire and train department staff, evaluate staff performance, and develop goals and objectives for staff.

A significant portion of the director's time will be spent cultivating and maintaining the partnerships that make the work of the proposed center possible. Other staff include: Internal Fellows, Regent Fellows, and Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs). One Internal Fellow has been selected, but searches for other staff will occur after the director is selected.

Fellows will be at the core of the Center's Research and Development activities. Fellows will bring a strong portfolio of applied research experience and connection to national organizations. Two UNI faculty members and one faculty member each from SUI and ISU will be engaged annually as Regents Fellows. Initial Regents Fellows will be selected to build upon existing work at UNI, SUI and ISU in the four identified research theme areas.

For example, at UNI, the Center for Teaching and Learning Mathematics, the Center for Disability Studies in Literacy, Language and Learning and the Regents Center for Early Childhood Education are all led by faculty that possess the expertise and connectivity to excel as initial Regents Fellows. Regents Fellows will report to the Center Director.

All fellowships will be competitively awarded by the Center Director and the Advisory Council, based on the applicants' research merits and proposed work. Fellows will be responsible for strengthening and expanding existing research themes, creating original research ideas, and working with partner sites to implement research results. In addition, these individuals will be expected to support the Center Director's efforts for seeking external funding and writing reports. Fellows will be expected to publish work in peer-reviewed journals or explore other means to promote the work of the Center through presentations.

Additionally, the Center will employ, at a minimum, two Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs) per academic year. TOSAs are in-service PK-12 educators that receive administrative approval to leave their current teaching assignment and join the Center's research activities on a temporary basis. TOSAs will be selected to provide strategic linkages between the Center's research agenda and real-world classroom experience, further ensuring that the Center is grounded in the practical application of its activities. Candidates for TOSAs will be recruited from among those educators recognized as Iowa Teachers of the Year and other similar recognitions. An application and interview process will be conducted from among those individuals interested in serving in this role. With the Center Director, the Advisory Council will be responsible for reviewing and selecting TOSAs that align with current research. TOSAs will work in partnership with the Research Fellows and will report to the Center Director.

As the final part of the Center's research team, undergraduate and graduate students will be integral to the Center's activities. The cutting-edge research undertaken by the Center's fellows will enable UNI to attract some of the best graduate students in the country with opportunities to engage in transformational work with these leading researchers. The Center Director will work with the UNI Graduate College to place graduate students in assistantships. Undergraduate positions will be filled through an application process, targeting specific majors. Graduate and undergraduate students will be assigned to an individual Research Fellow, based on their area of study and the Fellow's identified research needs. Research Fellows will be responsible for providing oversight of graduate and undergraduate student researchers and ensuring a successful learning experience.

Two staff members will be hired as support personnel to assist in managing the clerical and operational work of the center - an Administrative Assistant and a Project Manager. The Administrative Assistant will manage general clerical tasks, working with UNI Business Operations and other appropriate campus departments. The Project Manager will support the work of the Center Director, including sustaining partnerships and pursuing additional funding support for Center activities. The Project Manager will also serve as the Center's primary liaison to the local education agencies (LEAs), soliciting and organizing research projects based on their articulated needs and opportunities.

## **BUDGET**

UNI will provide \$300,000 per year; these funds were reallocated following the Price Lab School staff restructuring. As stated earlier, a grant from the Roy J. Carver Trust was obtained to support the launch and implementation of the Center. It will provide \$2 million over the next two years. Once in operation, the Center will work in collaboration with the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the UNI Foundation to pursue strategic grant opportunities, contracts, and external foundation support to advance the mission of the Center.

## **RESEARCH**

The Center's research will focus on 3-5 major themes, within which specific questions will be addressed by project teams and individual fellows. The Center personnel, advisory council and other education stakeholders will continuously re-examine and re-prioritize these themes, responding to the most salient educational research needs of the state and nation and inspiring innovation around traditional education problems. Some research themes may be on-going as certain education questions persist; others will be shorter-term, allowing the Center's research to be focused on key issues, but also to be more flexible and responsive. Research activities will include a blend of both long-term solutions and opportunities to quickly address an issue and disseminate best practices across the state.

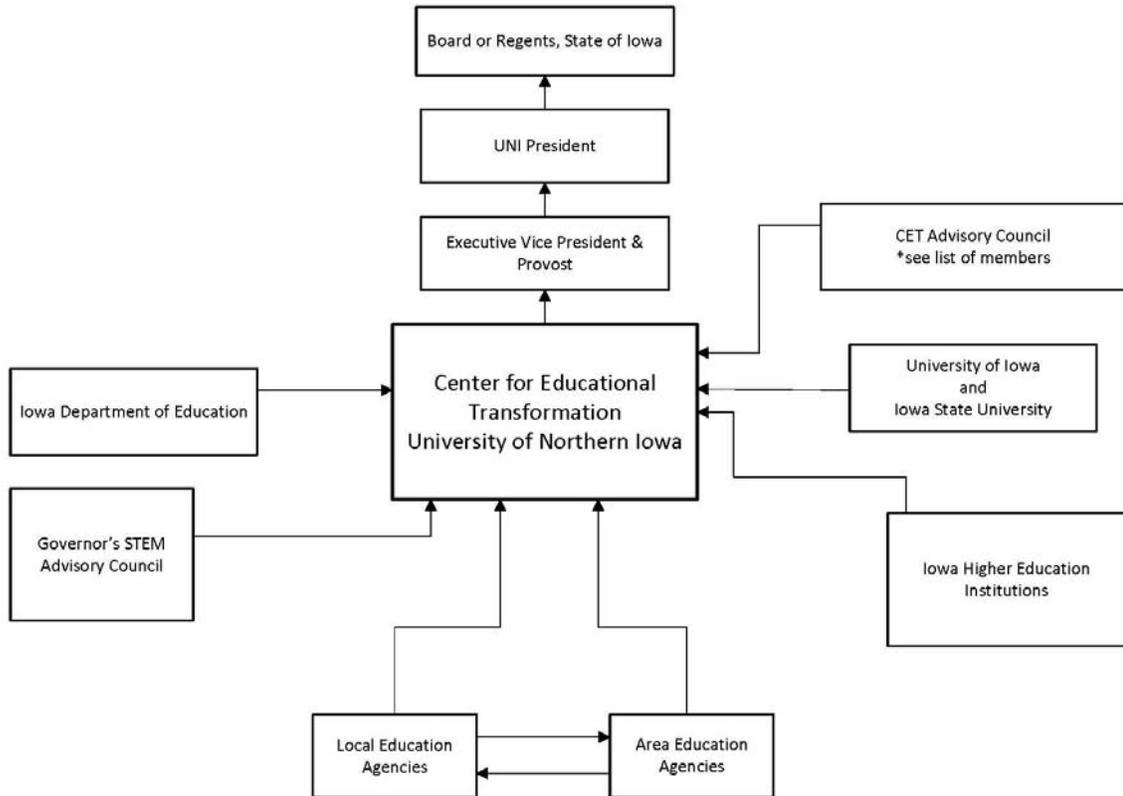
Initial planning has identified several theme areas in which UNI already possesses extensive strength and which have the potential to become world-class as a result of this investment. For instance, one initial theme will be math and science education in Iowa. This theme will build on UNI's current work in math and science education, a strong state-level emphasis on STEM education and future workforce needs (through the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council), and the prevalence of this issue in national research. Another initial theme will be Literacy. This theme area connects with the work of several existing Centers at UNI, including the Richard O. Jacobson Center for Comprehensive Literacy which works closely with Iowa schools to improve literacy for all Iowa students.

## **SUMMARY**

In conclusion, the Center for Educational Transformation will:

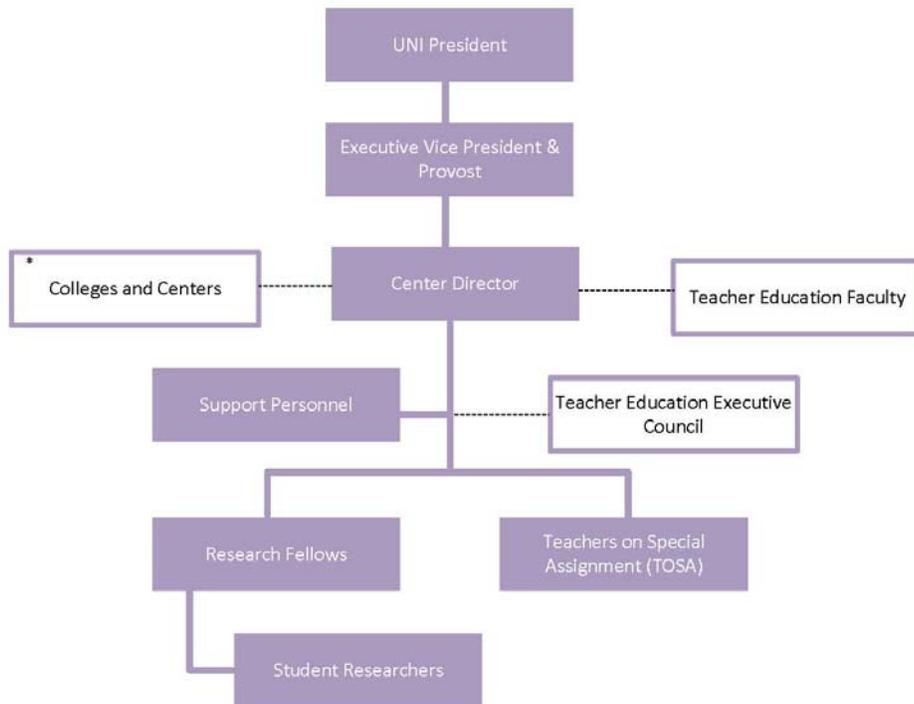
- Be the clearing house for educational innovation;
- Conduct transformative design-based implementation research;
- Provide professional development for practicing teachers;
- Broaden the arena of practice for pre-service teachers; and
- Synergize existing services of other active PK-12 centers across the university.

### Center for Educational Transformation (CET) Organizational Chart (External)



November 1, 2013

## Center for Educational Transformation Organizational Chart (Internal)



\* **Teacher preparation involves departments in all four colleges:** College of Education, College of Business Administration, College of Humanities, Arts & Sciences, and College of Social & Behavioral Sciences

**Teacher preparation may include the following centers:** Richard O. Jacobson Center for Comprehensive Literacy, Center for Disability Studies in Literacy, Language and Learning, Center for Teaching & Learning Mathematics, and Regents Center for Early Developmental Education

November 1, 2013

**CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Department/Institution</b>
Gloria Gibson	Executive Vice Pres. & Provost	University of Northern Iowa
Randy Pilkington	Executive Director – Business and Community Services	University of Northern Iowa
Mike Licari	Associate Provost of Academic Affairs and Dean, Graduate College	University of Northern Iowa
Alli Ingman	Director, Corporate & Foundation Relations	University of Northern Iowa
Tim Gilson	Assistant Professor – Educational Leadership & Postsecondary Education	University of Northern Iowa
Chad Heinzl	Associate Professor – Earth Sciences	University of Northern Iowa
Joel Haack	Dean – College of Humanities, Arts, & Sciences	University of Northern Iowa
Dwight Watson	Dean – College of Education	University of Northern Iowa
Kathryn East	Associate Professor – Education Psychology & Foundations	University of Northern Iowa
Larry Escalada	Professor – Physics	University of Northern Iowa
Anita Gordon	Director of Research Services – Sponsored Programs	University of Northern Iowa
Catherine Miller	Associate Professor – Mathematics	University of Northern Iowa
Katie Mulholland	Superintendent	Linn-Mar School District
Jon McKenzie	Director of Assessment & Compr Improvement	Cedar Falls School District
Tom Penaluna	President & CEO	CBE Companies, Inc
Jay Pennington	Bureau Chief	Iowa Department of Education
Susan Lagos-Lavenz	Associate Dean – College of Education	University of Iowa
John Schuh	Program Director, Emerging Leaders Academy	Iowa State University
Gary Norris	Superintendent	Waterloo School District
Slade Hovick	Math Teacher	West Liberty High School
David Zumbach	State Senator	Iowa General Assembly
Brian Schoenjahn	State Senator	Iowa General Assembly
Bob Kressig	State Representative	Iowa General Assembly
Chris Hagenow	State Representative	Iowa General Assembly